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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 CONAKRY 000055

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SUBJECT: GUINEA'S PRIME MINISTER ON THE ROLE OF MILITARY,
ELECTIONS, AND THE NEED TO AMEND THE CONSTITUTION

REF: 08 CONAKRY 829

Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission Kent C. Brokenshire

11. (C) Summary: Guinea's new Prime Minister appears to have accepted the military's domination of national politics. During a January 16 meeting with Charge and DCM, PM Komara claimed the governance of Guinea required the discipline of the armed forces to avoid disorder during the transition process, a statement that contradicted his earlier claim that he would have 'complete autonomy' in forming and directing his government. He defended the nomination of a military captain to the position of Minister of Finance, though he admitted the officer 'might not know anything about Bretton Woods.' PM said Guinea's constitution would need to be amended before elections could go forward, and proposed that the constitutional revision take place at the same time as voter registration. His stance on a number of topics indicated that he has abandoned his earlier vision of independent action and is essentially towing the military line. Charge informed the PM that meetings henceforth between the GoG and Embassy would take place at or below the DCM level.

THE NEED FOR MILITARY DISCIPLINE

12. (C) During a January 16 meeting with Charge and DCM, Guinea's new Prime Minister Kabine Komara said Guinea needed the power and discipline of the military to see it through the current political crisis. Speaking at the Primature, in the presence of the new ministers of transport and fisheries, PM Komara said the participation of the military in the transitional process was vital since it provided balance to civilian engagement. He responded to Charge's concerns that several appointees to cabinet positions appeared singularly unqualified by stating that their job is to provide inspiration and not necessarily technical expertise.

13. (C) He defended the nomination of Captain Mamadou Sande to the position of Minister of Finance saying, "He might not know much about Bretton Woods, but he does know something about finance." Komara went on to say that Sande, who had previously been in charge of preparing the budget for the military, had the necessary strength of character to tame the rapacious financial appetites of both the Presidency and the military. Komara was confident that Sande would impose fiscal discipline on the military since he was familiar with the ruses and artifices the armed forces employed to squeeze the treasury for money. The Prime Minister said the current Presidency was less likely to be a source of financial hemorrhaging since President Camara has only one wife as opposed to Conte who had four.

A CONSTITUTION BEFORE ELECTIONS

14. (C) Turning to elections, Komara said the six-month time frame for legislative elections proposed by the EU, US and other international players was unrealistic in its vision. Further, the current constitution would need to be amended in order to give legislative elections legitimacy and guidelines. Waving off Charge's assessment that a presidential decree would suffice to give elections legal standing, Komara proposed amending the current constitution while at the same time moving ahead with the registration process. The amended constitution would then be sent to an expanded Committee for Development and Democracy (CNDD) for approval. The PM insisted that political parties across the spectrum were calling for constitutional amendments, and that no date for elections should be set before this was done.

NARCOTICS

15. (C) The PM also discussed narcotics, saying that corruption from drug trafficking had 'deeply penetrated' the government. He noted that the honorary consul of South Korea, a Guinean citizen, had recently been arrested in connection with drugs. He promised vigorous action against traffickers, and hoped to enlist the assistance of the UN in this effort. Charge reminded the PM that former President Conte's son, Ousmane Conte, was heavily implicated in drug trafficking and had strong ties to the military. The PM urged the Charge to provide information on drug traffickers so that the GoG could go after them.

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UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE

16. (C) At the close of the meeting Charge Raspolic informed the PM that, due to the slow pace of returning Guinea to credible civilian rule, she had been directed by Washington not to meet with GoG officials until further notice. Discussions between the US Embassy and the government of Guinea would take place at the DCM level or below. The PM hoped the USG would reconsider its position.

COMMENT

17. (C) Comment: While outwardly affable and polite, Prime Minister Komara did not appear a man in control of the government. His defense of military involvement in the political process and his insistence that only military discipline can save Guinea at this hour appear to be the responses of an apologist, not a head of government poised to lead the nation into a new era of democracy and prosperity. They mark a significant departure from his optimism of only a few weeks ago when he told the Charge that he would "absolutely" be able to name his own cabinet, and would enjoy "complete autonomy" in running the government (reftel). The subsequent nominations of military personnel to a third of the cabinet positions, including the notorious torturer Lt. Claude Pivi to the post of Minister of Presidential Security, appear to suggest that the military has different plans for governing the country. End Comment

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